OFFICE OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Legislative FISCAL NOTE INSTRUCTIONS

BUDGET DIVISION

NOVEMBER 2004

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SECTION 1

What is the Fiscal Note Process?

1.1 What is a fiscal note?

Statement of fiscal impact

A fiscal note is a statement of the fiscal impact of legislation or a legislative proposal. A request is always linked to a particular version of a bill, draft bill, or bill amendment. The primary objective of a fiscal note is to provide the best possible estimate of the expenditure and cash receipt impacts of proposed legislation. There are three types of fiscal notes: state, local, and judicial.

1.2 What is the role of the Office of Financial Management?

Statutory Requirement

RCW 43.88A requires that the Office of Financial Management (OFM) coordinate the development of fiscal impact statements (fiscal notes) on legislation or legislative proposals. OFM must also approve fiscal notes for form, accuracy, and completeness and distribute the fiscal notes.

1.3 What is the role of agencies?

High quality and objectivity

Agencies provide the best possible estimate of the expenditure and cash receipt impacts of legislation on the agency and on state and local governments. Agencies need to be factual and objective in their fiscal notes and share assumptions with other agencies preparing fiscal notes on the same legislation.

1.4 What is the fiscal note process?

A request usually starts the process

In most cases, the Legislature initiates the request for a fiscal note. The Legislature forwards this request to OFM for action through the Internet Fiscal Note System. Occasionally, OFM or agencies may request or initiate the development of a fiscal note.

The fiscal note request will specify:

- The bill, draft bill, initiative, or amendment to be analyzed;
- The name of the individual making the request;
- A legislative staff contact;
- The desired due date; and
- Any special instructions.

What does OFM do with the request?

Upon receiving the fiscal note request, an OFM analyst will read the associated bill or draft to determine which agencies should be asked to prepare a fiscal note. OFM designates a lead agency, identifies the OFM analyst assigned to review the completed notes, and may add instructions to the request. OFM will then send the request to the assigned agencies via email. The request information will also be available in the system including a link to the bill or draft language.

Agencies then prepare the fiscal note

Each agency assigned the request prepares a fiscal note for its agency. The Local Government Fiscal Note Program within the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development prepares local government fiscal notes. The Office of the Administrator for the Courts prepares judicial impact fiscal notes. If a new agency is created by the legislation, an existing agency will be asked to prepare a fiscal note identifying the fiscal impact of the new agency. Once the fiscal note is prepared and approved, the agency transmits it to OFM for review. OFM cannot view a fiscal note until the agency releases it to OFM. The Internet Fiscal Note System supports the preparation, approval, and transmittal steps.

What is the role of the lead agency?

The lead agency is responsible for coordinating the shared assumptions underlying the fiscal notes written by the various agencies. This may involve getting all the affected agencies together to discuss the bill and the assumptions.

How much time do agencies have to complete the fiscal note?

In most cases, the Legislature is requesting a fiscal note in order to have the fiscal impact information in hand at the time it plans to review the bill. Thus they would like to receive the fiscal note at least 24 hours before a scheduled hearing. To facilitate this, OFM generally gives the agency a due date at least 72 hours from the time of the request. Sometimes the due date may be pushed forward or back to reflect the requirements indicated on the request. As a result of legislation passed in the 2000 session (RCW 43.132.020) those preparing local government fiscal notes will usually be given a due date seven calendar days from the date of the request.

The Internet Fiscal Note System will note the next scheduled hearing date associated with each request to assist all parties in meeting the quick turnaround requirement.

OFM reviews the completed fiscal notes

OFM is also required to approve fiscal notes for legislative-approved form, accuracy, reasonableness, and completeness before distributing them to the Legislature. An OFM budget analyst may have questions about the submitted fiscal note and may ask an agency to revise a note. Fiscal notes are not official until they are distributed by OFM.

OFM is charged with distributing approved fiscal notes

After approval, OFM distributes completed fiscal note packages electronically through the Internet. They are also posted on the OFM Web site. Email notification with a link to the published fiscal note is sent to the requester of the fiscal note, the OFM budget analyst, and the agency.

Agencies must submit fiscal notes to OFM for review, approval, and formal distribution. Agencies are **not** to distribute fiscal notes directly. However, agencies may share draft fiscal notes with legislative staff to facilitate communication. These should be clearly marked “DRAFT” to ensure that they are not mistaken for an approved fiscal note. Agencies should coordinate with their OFM analyst when sharing draft fiscal notes.

SECTION 2

Making a Fiscal Note Request

2.1 Use the Internet Fiscal Note System for making requests

About the Internet Fiscal Note System

The Legislature, agencies, and OFM use the Internet Fiscal Note System to request, prepare, transmit, approve, distribute, and monitor the status of fiscal notes. This section of the instructions includes information on how to use the system to request a fiscal note. See Section 2 to learn about more features of the system.

Benefits in using the system for requesting fiscal notes

System benefits include:

- Up to the minute, detailed status information on all requested fiscal notes.
- Easy access to any distributed fiscal note.
- Elimination of most of the paper in the fiscal note process.
- Reduction in the time spent in administrative tasks in all areas of the fiscal note process--requesting, submitting, reviewing, approving, and distributing fiscal notes, notifying agencies, accessing bill language.
- Authorized users can submit a request on a fiscal note directly to OFM.
- Tools to assist requesters in requesting a note on the exact bill version they need.
- Easy ways to modify or cancel a request.
- Ability to search for a specific fiscal note or request.
- On-line email links to OFM analysts and agency contacts.
- Provides hearing information, updated throughout the day, to all system users.
- Authorized users can generate an extract of fiscal note system data to customize information.

If the system is unavailable, OFM will provide guidance on how to submit a fiscal note

Should the fiscal note system become unavailable for short periods of time, a notice will appear on the logon and main console screens. The picture of the logon screen shown below notifies users of system unavailability for scheduled system maintenance purposes. Please note that system is unavailable the last Thursday of each month between the hours of 5 and 7 p.m. so that important system maintenance can be performed.

If the fiscal note system should be unavailable for a significant period of time, OFM will contact legislative staff with direction on an alternative submission approach.

2.2 Getting started

How to logon to the system

To access the Internet Fiscal Note System, open your web browser and type in this web address:

http://fns.ofm.wa.gov/

This will take you to the logon screen. Type in the User ID and Password assigned by your system administrator. Click the "Log In" button to enter.

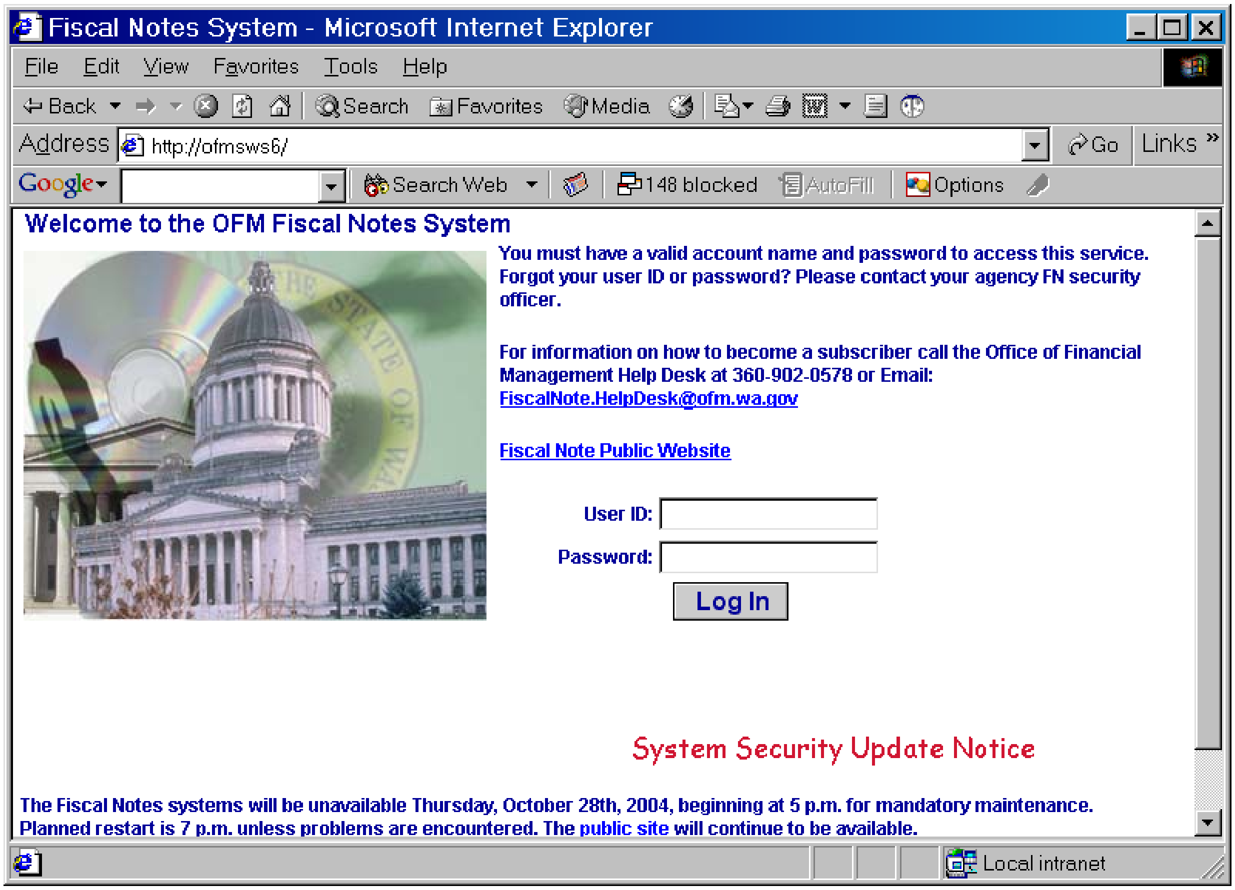
Contact your system administrator if you forgot your User ID or password

You must have a valid account name and password to access this service. If you get an error message because the user ID or password is invalid, please contact your agency's assigned security officer for assistance. That person is in a better position to assist you in ensuring you are using the correct user ID or resetting your password.

We recommend you use an Internet Explorer browser 6.0

The system will work best if you use an Internet Explorer browser version 6.0, which is the primary supported browser for the Internet Fiscal Note System. This browser is available as a free download.

Those using other browsers may not be able to experience the full functionality of the system features. We recommend that you work with your IS support staff if you do not currently have this browser installed on your computer.



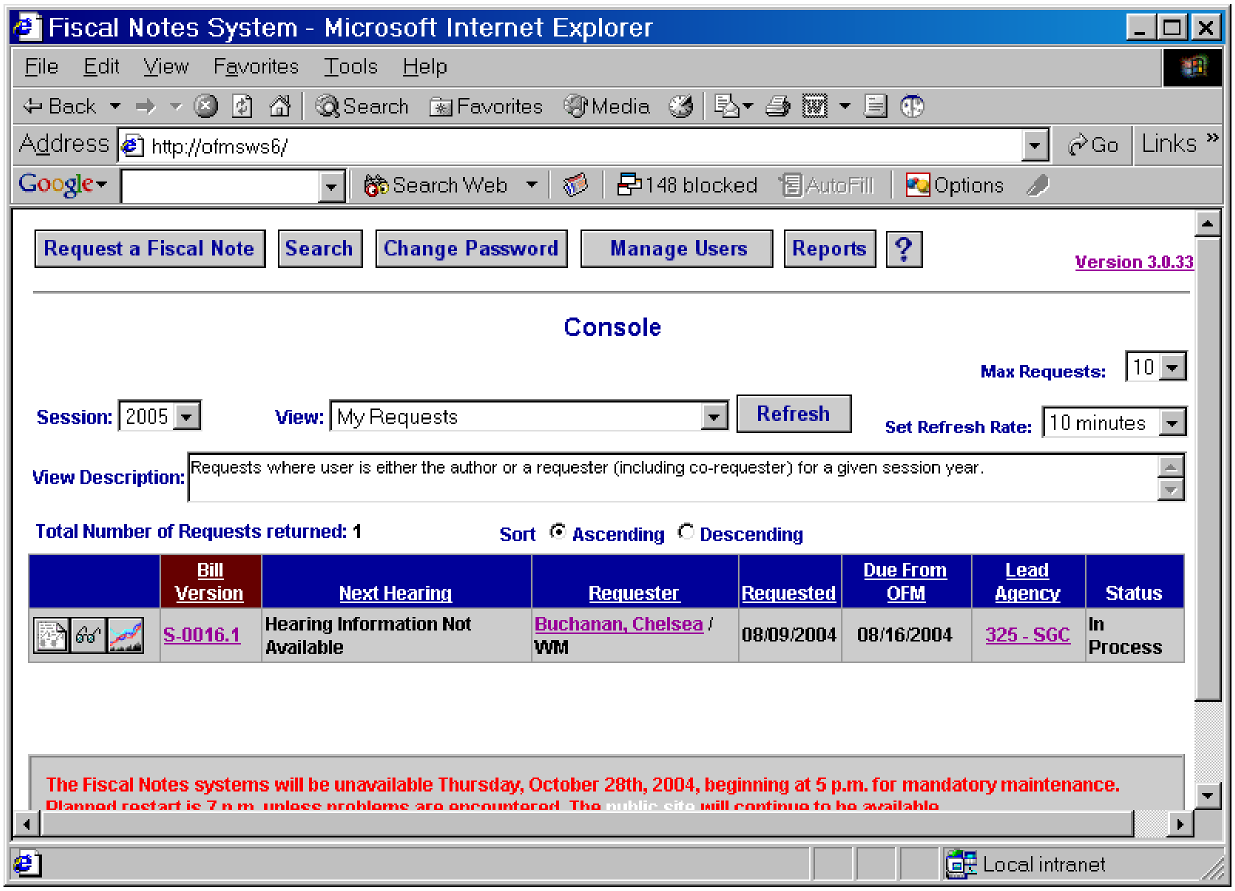
The Console screen serves as the home page

After logging on to the system, you will see the **Console** screen. The **Console** screen is a combination home page and summary status page. The **Console** offers buttons to get you started on whatever task you choose. It also offers a list of the fiscal note requests you have made and indicates the status of these requests.

The refresh rate function allows users to set the rate at which the **Console** screen will refresh with new information. Users have the option to select from a range of times.

The pagination function allows users to select the number of rows that will be returned on each page. For example, by selecting 10, the system will return results for 10 bills per page. Users can go from page to page by clicking on the page number located at the bottom of the screen.

A maximum number of 100 bills can be displayed on the **Console**. Please note that by choosing a larger number of bills to display, there is an associated increase in processing time to fill the page.

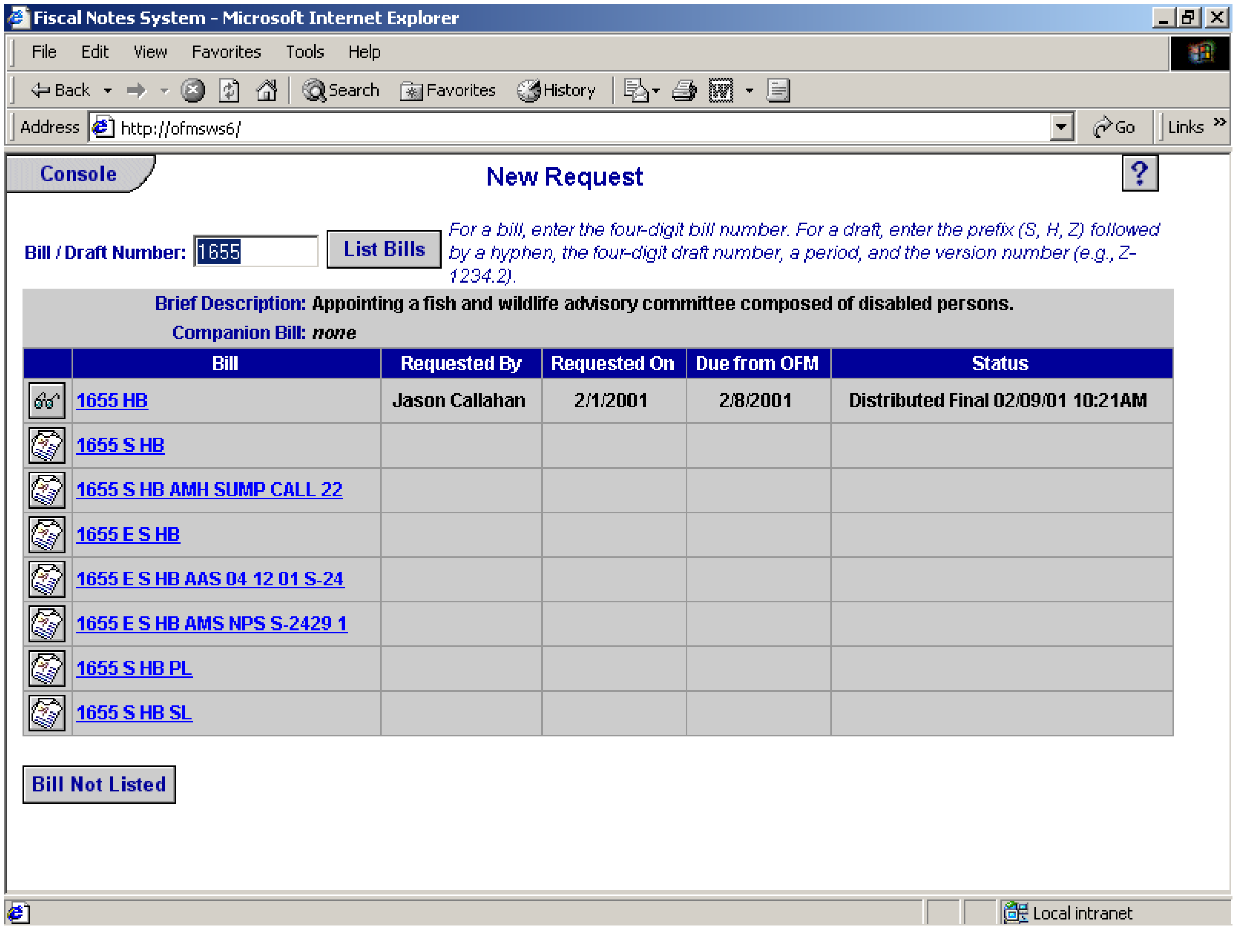


2.3 Requesting a fiscal note on a bill

Click "Request a Fiscal Note" and type in the bill number

At the **Console**, click on the "Request a Fiscal Note" button to go to the **New Request** screen.

Enter the four-digit bill number in the Bill Number box and click the "List Bills" button. The system will then provide a table of the full list of bills and drafts (available from LSC) in the table below. The list will also indicate the companion bill (if one exists) to the bill number you've entered.



The system will indicate if a request has already been made

The table will indicate whether a request has been made on any of the bills in the table. The table will indicate the requester, the date requested, the due date, and an indication of the fiscal note status (e.g., Unassigned, In Process, Distributed).

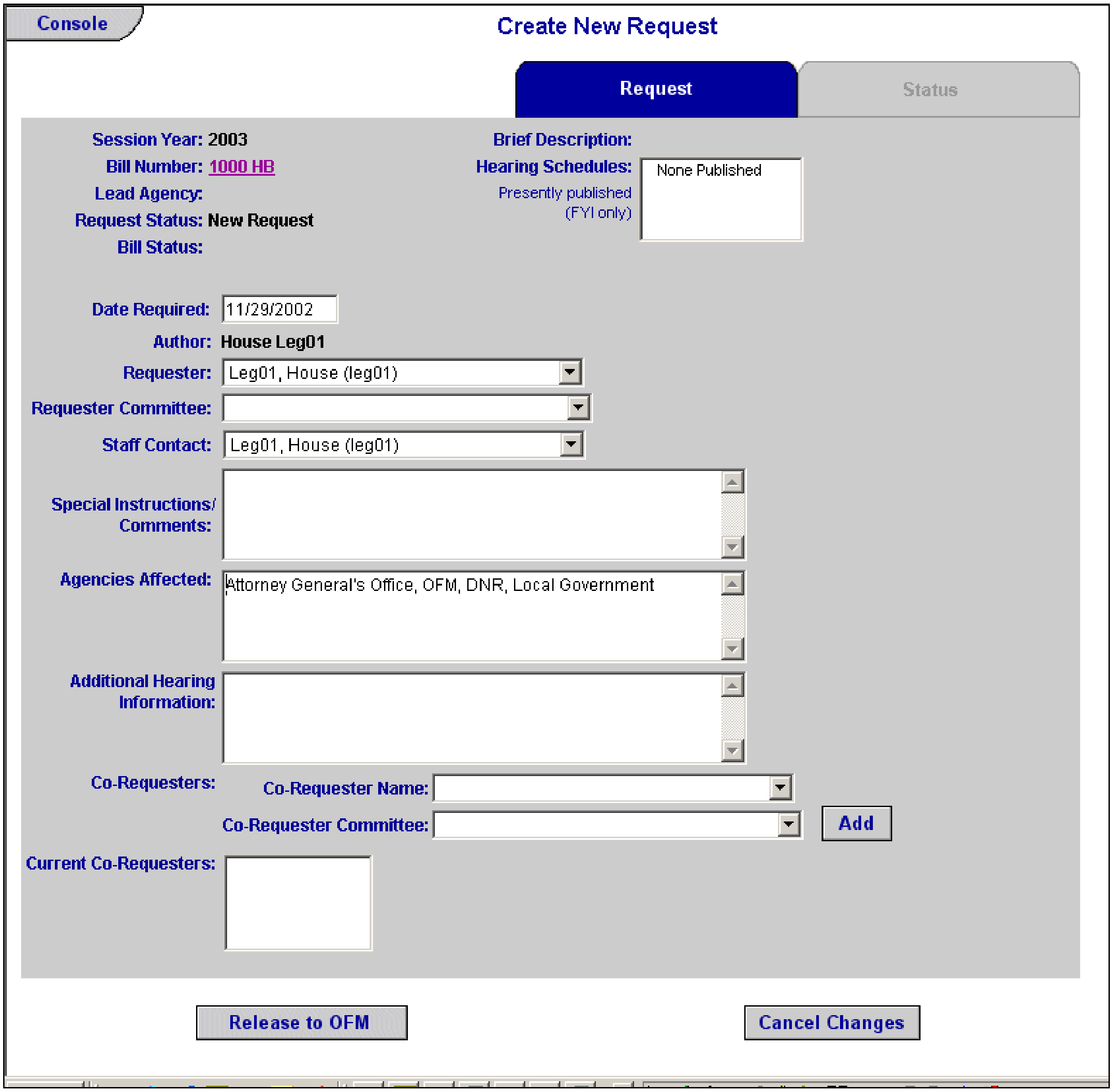
If you would like to sign on as a co-requester, see Section 2.8. You do not need to become a co-requester to access the fiscal note as soon as it is available.

Make the request, if one has not already been made

Click the "Create New Request" icon  next to the bill number to go to the **Create New Request** screen. *[NOTE: If you hold your cursor over a button for a moment, a description of the button's function will appear.]*

The **Request** screen is one of two that make up the request set of screens. Use the **Request** screen to enter all the request information.

- Date Required. This system will provide a default date of five working days from the date of the request, though you may indicate an alternative date if desired.
- The system will automatically indicate the author as the name of the person logged on. Use the pull-down list to indicate the name and committee of the requester and the staff contact.
- Type in special instructions or comments in the box provided, if desired.
- List the agencies thought to be affected by the legislation in the text box provided. This will help OFM facilitate agency assignment.
- Additional Hearing Information. A list box of all the hearing dates and the times for which the bill has a scheduled hearing is displayed in the upper right corner. There is also a text box further down the screen to type in additional hearing information if known.



Release the request to OFM

Click on the "Release to OFM" button at the bottom of the screen to save the request information and release the request to OFM. The system will ask you to verify whether you want to release the request. If you choose to do so, the system will return you to the **Console** screen.

2.4 Requesting a fiscal note on a bill not listed

What to do if the bill is not listed

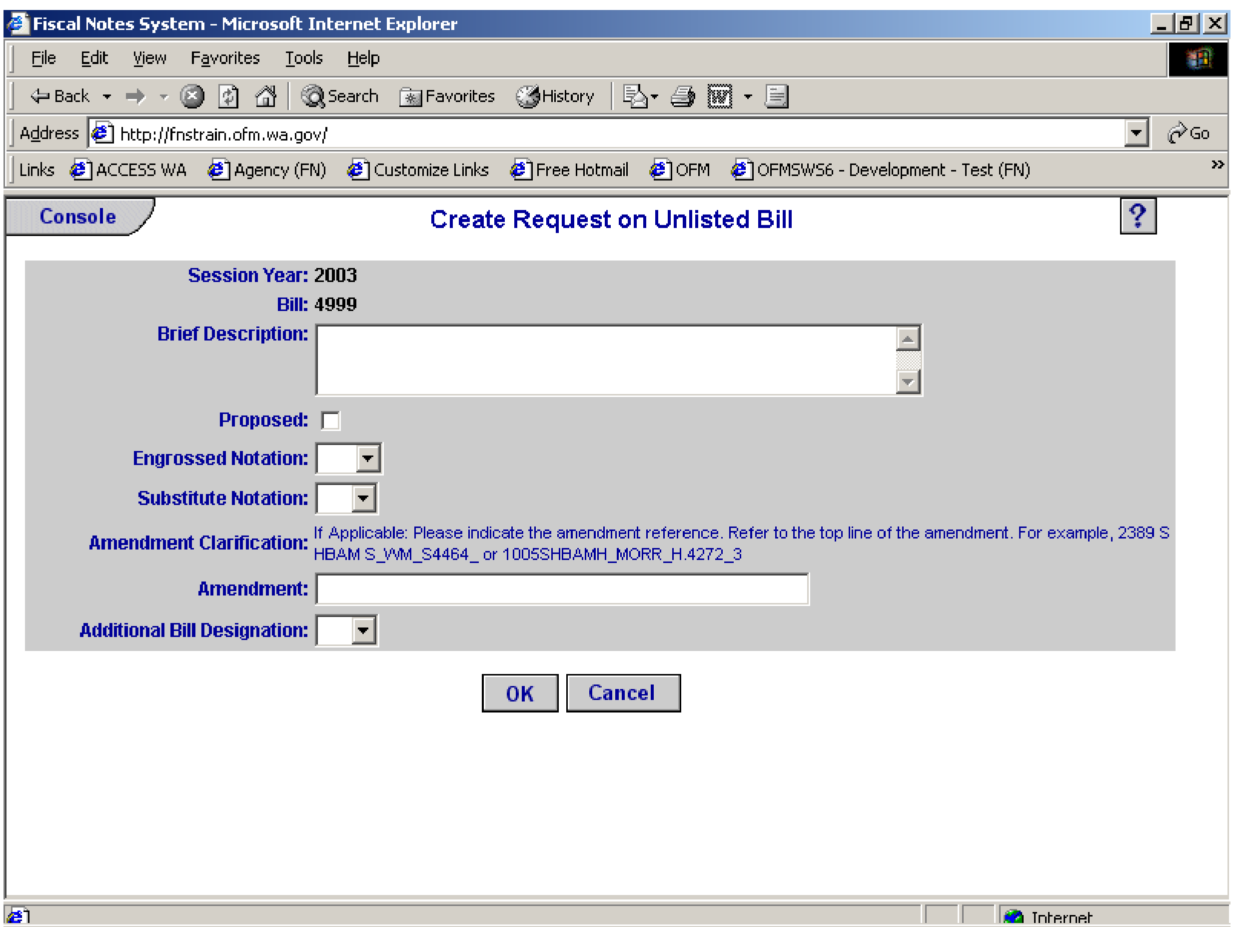
You may want to make a request on a bill version that has not yet been listed in the LSC database that is used to populate the selection table, e.g., a propose substitute or an amended bill. In this case, when you type in the bill number and click "List Bills," the bill will not appear in the list returned to you.

Requesting a fiscal note on a proposed substitute

When requesting a fiscal note on a proposed substitute please use the bill number, not the Code Reviser draft number. By linking to the bill number, the request is tied with other versions of the bill and will make it easier to find later.

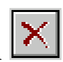
Click the "Bill Not Listed" button and enter the brief description.

Click the "Bill Not Listed" button to go to the **Create Request on Unlisted Bill** screen. The user can then enter their own proposed, substitute, or engrossed flag, a draft or amendment number, or other valid additional bill designation. Clicking the "OK" button will take you to the **Create New Request** screen.



Finish preparation as for other bills and attach a copy of the bill

Use the **Create New Request** screen to enter all the request information as described above. You will be required to attach a copy of the bill before releasing the request. Only Adobe Acrobat PDF files can be attached. (See instructions on how to do this below.)

- Click the "Browse" button in the Attachment section of the **Request** screen to open the operating system's open file selection box to facilitate the file selection. Select the desired file as usual. The system will return you to the **Request** screen and the file name will appear in the box next to the "Browse" button.
- Click the "Add Document" button to attach the document to the request. The document information will be displayed in the document table.
- Click on the "Document" icon  next to a line in the table to view the document.
- Click on the "X" icon  next to a line to delete the attachment from the request. The item will then disappear from the list.

Documents must be in PDF format before they can be attached

There are several important benefits to PDF files:

- A PDF file for an attachment ensures that the bill language will look the same to OFM and agencies (line for line, page for page).
- A PDF file can't be changed easily. Thus, there is some added assurance of file integrity.
- A PDF file has no documented virus problems.

The Code Reviser's Office will provide PDF files on request

The Code Reviser's Office has agreed to provide PDF files of draft bill language upon request to a legislative committee staff member for purposes of a fiscal note request.

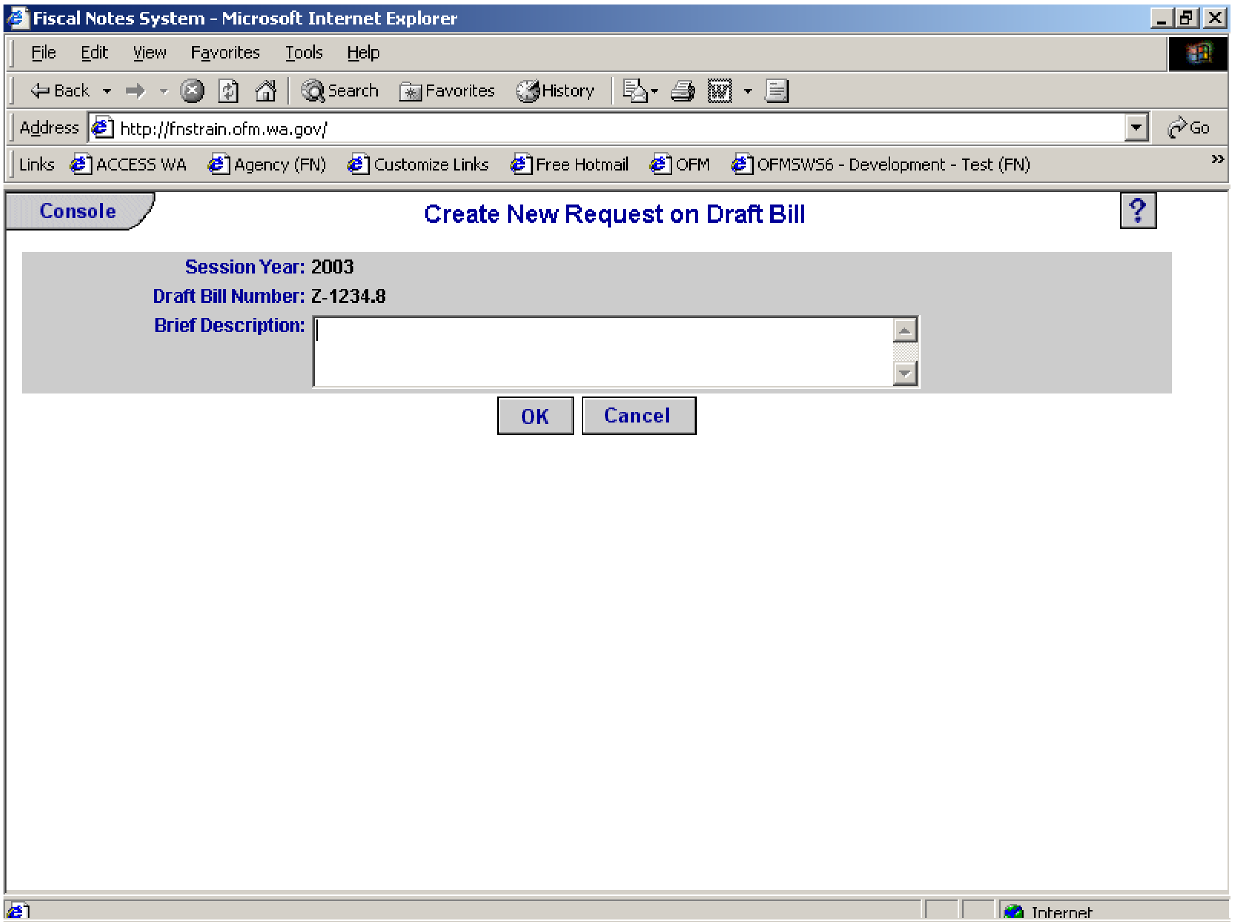
2.5 Requesting a fiscal note on a draft bill

Enter the draft bill number

At the **Console**, click on the "Request a Fiscal Note" button to go to the **New Request** screen. Enter the draft number in the Bill Number box (e.g.; Z-1234.1) and click the "List Bills" button. Most likely, because this is a draft bill, the bill will not be included in the list returned to you.

Click the "Bill Not Listed" button and enter the brief description.

If the bill is not listed, click the "Bill Not Listed" button at the bottom of the screen to go to the **Create New Request on Draft Bill** screen. Type in the brief description for the draft bill. Click the "OK" button to go to the **Create New Request** screen.



Prepare the request

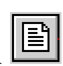
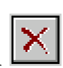
Use the **Request** screen to enter all the request information.

- Date required. This system will provide a default date of five working days from the date of the request, though you may indicate an alternative date if desired.
- Hearing Schedules. A list box of all the hearing dates and the times for which the bill has a scheduled hearing. There is also a text box further down the screen to type in additional hearing information if known.
- The system will automatically indicate the author as the name of the person logged on. Use the pull-down list to indicate the name and committee of the requester and the staff contact.
- Type in special instructions or comments in the box provided, if desired.
- List the agencies thought to be affected by the legislation in the text box provided, if desired.

Attach a copy of the draft bill to the request

You will be required to attach a draft document before releasing the request. Only pdf files can be attached.

Click the "Browse" button in the Attachment section of the **Request** screen, to open the operating system's open file selection box to facilitate the file selection. Select the desired file as usual. The system will return you to the **Request** screen and the file name will appear in the box next to the "Browse" button.

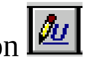
- Click the "Add Document" button to attach the document to the request. The document information will be displayed in the document table.
- Click on the "Document" icon  next to a line in the table to view the document.
- Click on the "X" icon  next to a line to delete the attachment from the request. The item will then disappear from the list.

The Code Reviser's Office will provide PDF files on request

The Code Reviser's Office has agreed to provide PDF files of draft bill language upon request to a legislative committee staff member for purposes of a fiscal note request.

2.6 Modifying a fiscal note request

Click on the modify/view request icon

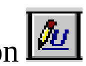
At the **Console**, click on the "Modify Request" icon  next to a listed bill number. This will take you to the **Request** screen. Make the desired updates and click the "Save Changes" button to save your changes.

Limits on modifying requests

- Affected agencies and special instructions can be updated until the time the request is sent to agencies by OFM.
- The hearing date and due date can be updated until the time the first fiscal note has been distributed.
- Only the author or requester will be able to modify the fiscal note request.

2.7 Canceling a fiscal note request

Click on the modify/view request icon

At the **Console**, click on the “Modify Request” icon  next to the bill number. This will take you to the **Request** screen.

Click the "Cancel Request" button. You will receive a message asking you to confirm the cancellation. If yes is selected, the user will be returned to the **Console** screen. The request will remain listed on the **Console**, but the status will be listed as "Cancelled."

Limits on canceling requests

- Once the complete fiscal note package has been distributed, the request can no longer be cancelled.
- Only the requester or author can cancel a request. However, if someone is on the co-requester list, the person canceling the note would receive a message that confirms their cancellation but notes that there is at least one co-requester so that the request will remain in effect. The request will remain on the **Console** screen. Once the original requester has cancelled, those on the co-requester list would be allowed to cancel the request.

2.8 How to become a co-requester

What is a co-requester

If a request has already been made for a fiscal note, an authorized user can choose to sign up as a co-requester. While all users will be able to view fiscal notes and their status in the system, co-requesters would be notified when the fiscal note is distributed. Also, the existence of co-requesters will keep the fiscal note request alive if the original requester later cancels the request.

How to become a co-requester

From either the **Console**, **New Request,** or **Search** screens, click on the "Become Co-Requester" icon  next to the desired bill for which a request has already been made. This will take the user to the **Request** screen.

Use the pull-down list boxes next to the co-requesters box to select the name and committee of the co-requester. Click the "Add" button to add the requester to the co-requester list.

What happens when the primary requester cancels the request

For whatever reason, the primary requester may cancel the request made on a bill. If this happens, the co-requester becomes the primary requester as well as the staff contact.

How to remove yourself as a co-requester

To remove your name from the co-requester list, highlight the name in the co-requester list box and click the "Remove Me as Co-Requester" button. This will remove the name from the list.

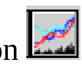
SECTION 3

Other Internet Fiscal Note System Features

3.1 How do I monitor the status of fiscal notes?

View summary status on the Console or view more detailed status on the Status tab

The **Console** screen offers a summary status of fiscal notes. You may also access a more detailed status on a particular fiscal note.

At the **Console**, click on the "View Request Status" icon  next to desired bill number. This will take you to the **Request Status** screen. This screen provides detailed status on the fiscal note request.

Clicking on the "View Request Status" icon next to a bill listed on the **Search** screen will also take you directly to the **Request Status** screen. From the **Request** screen, access the **Request Status** screen by clicking on the "Status" tab at the top of the screen.

Customizing the Console view

You have the ability to customize the list of fiscal note requests you'll view on the **Console** screen.

- Use the Session pull-down list to select the desired session. (*The default will be the current session.*)
- Use the View pull-down list to tailor the list of request information. (*The views let you look at a subset of all the fiscal note requests if desired.) The view options include:*

My Requests (including those where I'm co-requester) (default view)
List of those requests where I am the request author or requester for the session year displayed.

My Distributed Fiscal Notes
List of those requests where I am the request author or requester for the session year displayed and where the fiscal notes have been distributed (including partial, final, and revised).

All Requests not yet assigned by OFM
List of all requests for my agency (House, Senate, or OFM), released to OFM for the session year displayed, where agencies have not yet been notified. (This would indicate the requests that could still be modified.)

My Cancelled Requests
List of all requests for my agency (House, Senate, or OFM), released to OFM for the session year displayed, where the request has been cancelled by me and any co-requesters.

My Requests Pending Distribution
List of all my requests that have not been cancelled and are part of a fiscal note package but have not been published.

My Requests in Process
List of all requests released to OFM where fiscal notes are in process either at the agency or under review at OFM.

Try these handy features

- Clicking on an underlined name under "Agency" or "OFM Analyst" will bring up an addressed email form.
- Clicking on an underlined bill number will bring up the text of the bill. (This feature can be found on other screens as well.)
- Click on the underlined column heading to sort the results by that column criteria. (This feature is available on the tables on the other screens.)

3.2 How do I view a distributed fiscal note?

Click on the View Fiscal Note icon

Once a fiscal note has been distributed, users are able to view the entire package through the **Console**, **Search** screen, or at the OFM Web site (http://www.ofm.wa.gov/fns/).

From the **Console** or **Search** screens, click the “View Fiscal Note” icon  to view a distributed fiscal note package for that particular bill.

- The package consists of a rollup page labeled Multiple Agency Fiscal Note Summary followed by the individual agency fiscal notes, including the Local Government Fiscal Note and/or Judicial Impact Note, if applicable.
- The screen also allows the user to print the package. Be sure to use the print icon on the lower toolbar.

3.3 How do I use the search function?

Search on a variety of parameters

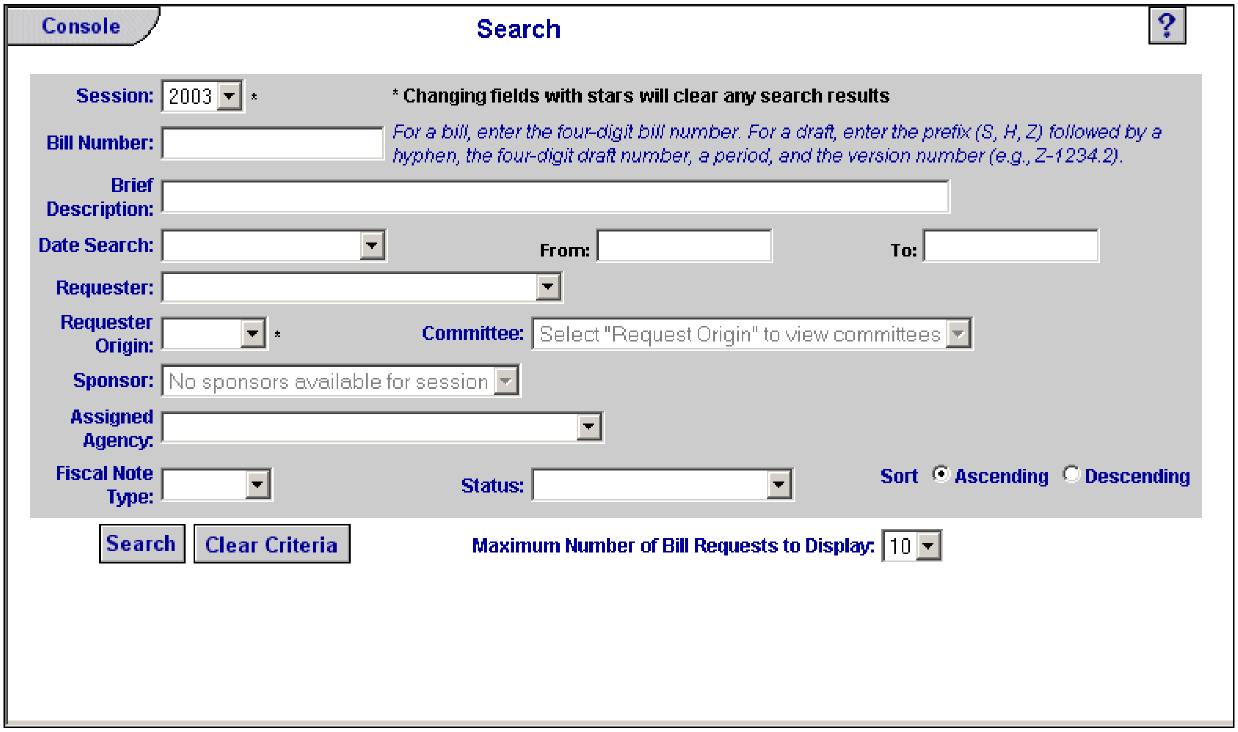
From the **Console**, click the “Search” button to go to the **Search** screen.

The **Search** screen enables the user to search fiscal note requests by:
- bill number
- brief description
- type of date (Request, Due From OFM, Due From Agency, Hearing)
- requester
- committee
- requester origin
- fiscal note type (state, local, judicial)
- bill sponsor
- agency
- status

Select the desired parameters and click the "Search" button.

- The search will produce a table of results. An icon next to each request will enable the user to link to the **Request** and **Status** screens.
- Click on the underlined column heading to sort the results by that column criteria. (This feature is available on the tables on the other screens.)
- The "Clear Criteria" button clears the search settings.

The sort will include companion bills of the bill number requested.



3.4 How do I extract data from the fiscal note system?

Generating an extract from search results

OFM does not provide support beyond the creation of a tab-delimited file. Users of this feature will require a high level of programming and data relationship knowledge to make effective use of the data. Access to this function is restricted. The extract data is limited to the information regarding request information and data for distributed fiscal notes.

1. From the **Console**, click the Search button to go to the **Search** screen.

2. Select the desired parameters and click the Search button to produce a table of results.

3. If you have access to the extract feature, the Extract Data button will appear on the search results screen.

4. Click the Extract Data button. Select the extract you want to perform. Click the Generate Extract button. Save the extract to a file.

5. Import the tab delimited text file into Excel or Access software and manipulate the data.

3.5 System maintenance features

Changing your password

From **Console**, click the “Change Password” button to go to the **Change Password** screen. Enter old and new passwords as indicated. Click the “Change Password” button to change the password.

3.6 How do I access reports?

View or print a variety of reports

From **Console**, click the “Reports” button to go to the **Reports Selection** screen. From here, the user can view or print the following reports:

- Primary Agency Contacts – lists primary point of contact for all agencies.
- Status of All Fiscal Notes in Process – lists all fiscal notes that have not been distributed final and their current status.
- Status of All Fiscal Notes Requested – lists all fiscal notes requested and their current status.
- Status of All Requests for Fiscal Notes – lists all requests for fiscal notes and the status of those requests.

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